

EXECUTIVE MESSAGE.

The following message from the Governor was received and read:

Executive Office,
April 14, 1897.

To the Senate: Senate bill No. 285, entitled an act making appropriation for the establishment of a public park on the site of the battlefield of San Jacinto and the erection of necessary buildings and improvements therein, and providing for the condemnation of a sufficient amount of land upon which to establish said park, is herewith returned without approval. The bill provides that it is necessary for the public use that the State should own 250 acres of land on the site of the battlefield of San Jacinto, in addition to what is already owned, for a public park; that the sum of \$25,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary is appropriated for the purchase by the State of not more than 250 acres of land on said battlefield for a public park and for the erection of such suitable buildings, monuments and improvements as may be deemed appropriate by three commissioners to be appointed by the Governor; and that it shall be the duty of said commissioners to purchase the land for said park, for which they are clothed with plenary powers, to select the same, and carry through the terms of sale, and to construct such buildings, improvements and monuments thereon as they may consider appropriate to its purpose as a public park commemorative of the battle of San Jacinto. The commissioners are authorized to pay for the land whatever they may consider the fair and reasonable market value thereof, not exceeding \$25 per acre, but should they, for any reason, be unable to agree with the owners of the land as to the price to be paid for it, they are required to take steps to condemn it in the name of the State by like proceedings as are now prescribed for railway companies in the acquisition of right of way. After the appointment of the commissioners by the Governor and their acceptance of the appointment, the State Treasurer is directed to pay over to them on their demand the money appropriated by the act or so much as they may demand.

In the purchase of the land, the commissioners are limited by the act to \$25 per acre, or an aggregate sum of \$6250. If the land should be acquired on those terms, the remainder

of the appropriation, amounting to \$18,750, can be expended by them as they may see fit, and without oath or bond, and without report or accountability to any authority. They may put the entire amount in a monument or building, leaving the enclosure, drainage and adornment of the grounds to future Legislatures. On the contrary, if the commissioners should fail to agree with the owners of the land upon the price, the act does not, and in the very nature of the case may not, fix a limit to the value which the jury may put upon the land, and the act is so framed that the commissioners may be forced to pay the award, notwithstanding it may absorb the entire appropriation. That or an amount approaching it would be an extravagant if not an unconscionable price judged by the limit fixed in the bill to govern the commissioners in private negotiations. If it should be said that the State should not measure patriotism with money, the answer is that none should be permitted to traffic in her hallowed and sacred places.

Even in the midst of revolutionary sentiment, existing conditions force us to a careful husbandry of our resources. Wherever it is practicable, expenses must be diminished and new fields of expenditure avoided. The financial situation in the State must be candidly and squarely met. Not only should expenditures which are carried only in appropriation bills such as this be limited, but immediate action is necessary in independent legislation. If every dollar of taxes estimated by the Comptroller shall be collected, but no additional revenue is provided and no radical reduction of expenses is made, as pointed out in the general message, expenditures will exceed receipts by at least \$250,000. Under such conditions, and yielding to none in admiration of the heroes of the Revolution and appreciation of their services to mankind, it seems to me we should not do more at this time than acquire the battle ground at a price not greater than that fixed in the bill for the purchase, which may be done at this session by a separate bill or an amendment to the general appropriation bill. Justice to the taxpayers, needy and impoverished as thousands of them are, will not permit us at this time to erect monuments and beautify parks. The spirit which would thus commemorate the valor of the soldiers of San Jacinto is ennobling and inspiring, but it will lose

much of its elevation and grandeur if indulged to the inconvenience and hardship of the people. It is something, also, to know that the fame and achievements of these heroes are far more enduring than any heap of stone or granite or marble you may pile on the field where they wrought our independence.

C. A. CULBERSON.